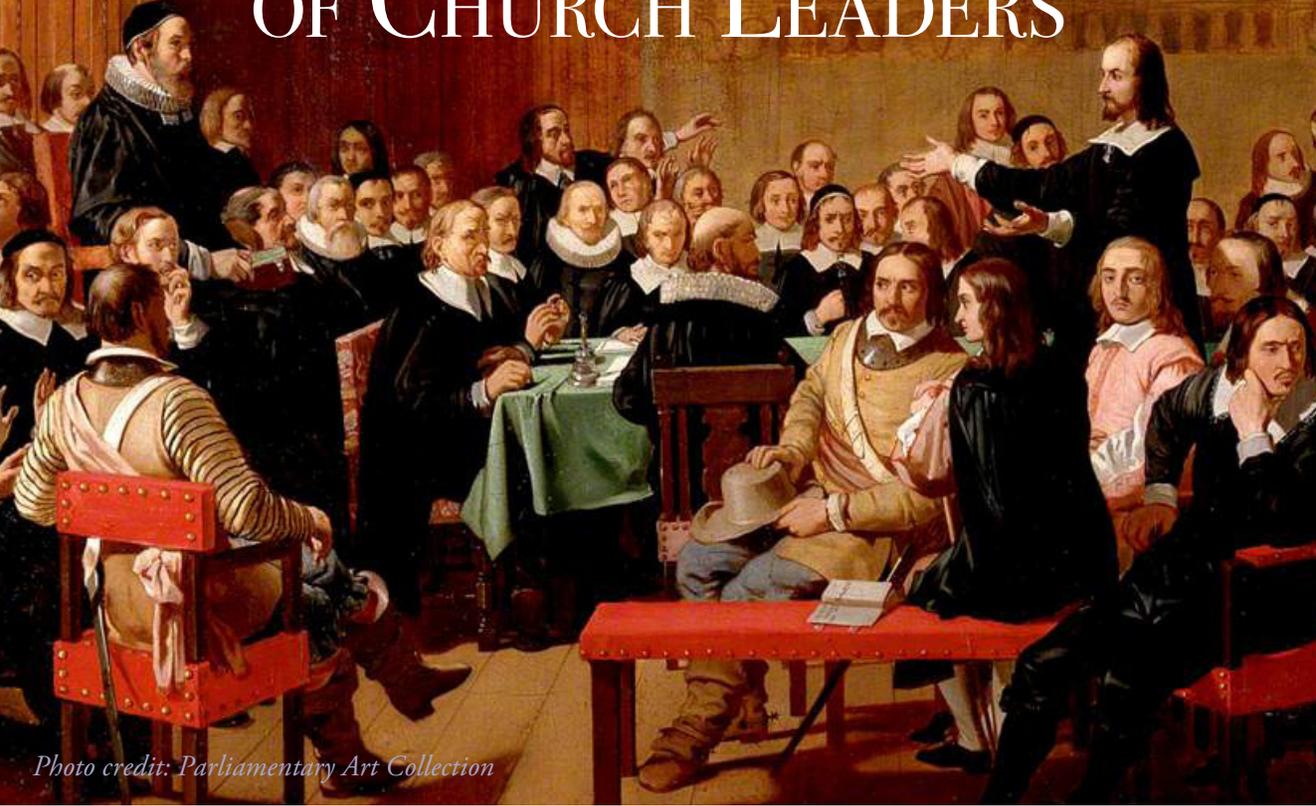


# Effectiveness OF CHURCH LEADERS



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**L**eadership does not exist in a vacuum. Effective church leadership is not only efficient and fruitful in fulfilling its God-given responsibilities, but the fellow leaders who make up the leadership must also have a constant desire and aspiration in the Lord, as well as a good, biblically-based spiritual rapport with members of the congregation.

After being in the pastoral ministry for more than two decades, it is this writer's conviction that no leader has complete mastery over the work, challenges, temptations and trials that he will encounter in the ministry. Constant

vigilance is necessary from the collective leadership, the individual leader and every member of the church to maintain an effective leadership in the church.

## **The Leadership's Collective Responsibilities**

The Church Session (consisting of pastor, elders and deacons), together with the preachers of the church must assume a collective responsibility to safeguard and guide the church in the truth and holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. They must be cooperative and accountable to one another to provide mutual encouragement,

correction and support. They must remain united and harmonious as they serve the Lord together. The failure of a leader to submit, collaborate and join forces with fellow leaders will affect the efforts of the rest of the leadership.

From the Scriptures, we know that the apostles had been blessed with responsible men who maintained a reciprocal relationship with them in the ministry. The apostle Paul often expressed his boundless joy in men who served along with him in the ministry with great camaraderie. Consider a few cases in point:

- “Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you” (2 Corinthians 8:23).
- “Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier” (Philippians 2:25).
- “Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ” (Colossians 1:7).
- “Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ” (1 Thessalonians 3:2).
- “Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer” (Philemon 1:1).

The church leaders are not in a competition among themselves. There should be no rivalry among the leaders of the church. When those in the leadership are like-minded, the church will greatly benefit from their congenial spirit and efforts. This is well demonstrated in Paul’s testimony about Timothy: “For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state” (Philippians 2:20). Indeed, together they must give of themselves to protect and feed the church. In Acts 20:28, Paul commanded the elders of the

Ephesian church, “Take heed therefore ... to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (cf. 1 Peter 5:1-3).

## **The Leaders’ Individual Responsibilities**

Every church leader must be diligent in ensuring his daily growth in the Lord. His maxim ought to be: “grow or die!” In the church leadership, when one stops growing spiritually, he has already started to die.

Every leader must also be cautious to discipline himself in order to remain holy before the Lord. He must examine himself in order to recognise and avoid anything in him that could damage his testimony and effectiveness as a church leader. The apostle Paul knew that he needed to be on his guard consistently when he said in 1 Corinthians 9:25-27 – “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible ... But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” There is certainly no room for spiritual complacency. Paul disciplined himself, that he might not do anything that would tarnish his reputation and nullify his service which would render him ineffective (or even disqualified) as a leader.

Here is a checklist for all in the leadership on appropriate conduct that befits effective church leaders:

- Am I godly in character, manifesting the life of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit?
- Do I commune with the Lord and pray fervently?

- Have I been leading my family in the Lord?
- Have I increased in faith, knowledge of God's Word and service?
- Have I shown resilience in the face of difficulties and even setbacks?
- Have I patiently endured my trials with an unflinching spirit?
- Have I cultivated good relationships with fellow leaders in the service of the Lord?
- Have I been responsible, prompt and devoted to the Lord's work that is assigned to me?
- Do I stir my heart to give my very best for the Lord?
- Have I been self-sacrificial in being generous and helpful concerning the needs of the church?
- Have I given myself to improve and build up the areas of my responsibilities and the lives of those who are under my care?
- Do I encourage others in the church to love and serve the Lord?

### **The Church's Cooperation with the Leaders**

To have an effective church leadership, members of the church have an important role to play. Hebrews 13:17 reminds us that church leaders will have to give an account to the Lord about the souls of their flock – “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” In this regard, we do well not to oppose them or bring hardship and grief to their spirit.

Disregarding divine counsels (as is warned in Hebrews 13:17) is to be a hindrance to the work of God's appointed

servants in the church. Unnecessary criticism, rude remarks, disrespect, an uncooperative attitude, threatenings and all such conduct not only would bring sadness and struggles in the leaders' hearts, they are spiritually dangerous to oneself and to the church. Giving your leaders cause for groaning is of no advantage to you. If they struggle with the burdens of the ministry, please patiently and lovingly avail yourself to help them in a God-honouring manner. Let every God-honouring Christian be a great joy to his church leaders, be they the pastor, elder, deacon or preacher. Indeed, let every God-honouring congregation take heed of Paul's impassioned exhortation to the Corinthian church – “Wherefore shew ye to them (in the context, fellow labourers in the Gospel like Titus; and by extension, church leaders), and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting (or rejoicing) on your behalf” (2 Corinthians 8:24).

### **Conclusion**

When the church leaders pay heed to their collective and individual responsibilities, they will not only be effective but also have joy in their service. When the congregation is edified and grows spiritually in response to the effective service of its church leaders, what joy it brings to their hearts! This is highlighted and experienced by the apostle Paul concerning the Thessalonian church – “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). To be truly able to say such glorious things about a church would be a good measure of the biblical effectiveness of the leaders of that church.